

## Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 ASUNCI 00474 022048Z

ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 TRSE-00 /074 W

-----014065 022050Z /64

P 021955Z FEB 78

FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2198

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ASUNCION 0474

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PA

SUBJ: ELECTION CAMPAIGN - PARAGUAYAN STYLE

1. PARAGUAY'S 1.2 MILLION REGISTERED VOTERS BY LAW ARE SUPPOSED TO CAST THEIR BALLOTS ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12 FOR ONE OF THREE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES AND FOR LISTS OF SENATORS AND NATIONAL DEPUTIES WHICH HAVE RECEIVED GOVERNMENT APPROVAL.

2. THE REASONS ARE NUMEROUS, BUT THE PRINCIPAL ONE IS PUBLIC APATHY. WITH ONLY TEN DAYS TO GO UNTIL THE GENERAL ELECTIONS WHICH WILL GIVE STROESSNER A NEW FIVE YEAR "MANDATE", THERE IS AN ALMOST TOTAL LACK OF INTEREST IN WHAT THE GOVERNMENT CLAIMS WILL BE A DEMONSTRATION OF "PURE DEMOCRACY."

3. THE RULING COLORADO PARTY HAS MADE ONLY PRO-FORMA EFFORTS TO GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF CAMPAIGNING. THE PARTY HAS STAGED A FEW RALLIES IN THE INTERIKOR; AND STROESSNER HAS GIVEN A FEW SPEECHES IN WHICH THE THEMES ARE HIS INESCAPABLE DUTY TO BOW TO THE POPULAR DEMAND THAT HE REMAIN IN OFFICE, AND THE PARTY'S DEVOTION TO PRESERVING LAW AND ORDER AGAINST "COMMUNIST TERRORISM." LARGE POSTERS OF STROESSNER (AND OF HIM ALONE) NOW DEFACE ACRES OF WHAT USED TO BE BLANK WALL SPACE IN ASUNCION. LOUDSPEAKERS AT PARTY WARD HEAD-  
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 ASUNCI 00474 022048Z

QUARTERS AND MOBILE UNITS BLARE OUT THE "COLORADO POLKA" EVENINGS AND ON THE WEEKEND URGING THE POPULACE TO VOTE. THESE ARE THE ONLY SURFACE INDICATIONS THAT ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY IS AFOOT. WITH TEMPERATURES TOPPING 100 DEGREES DAILY IT WOULD TAKE MORE THAN THE CAMPAIGN HAS OFFERED TO BREAK THE LETHARGY OF THE POPULACE.

4. THE "OPPOSITION" -- REPRESENTED BY WHAT IS LEFT OF THE RADICAL LIBERAL PARTY FACTION HEADED BY JUSTO (CHOCHO) PASTOR BENITEZ -- HAS HELD ONE RALLY IN CAAGUAZU, A SMALL TOWN IN THE INTERIOR, WHICH REPORTEDLY WAS ATTENDED BY A FEW HUNDRED PEOPLE BROUGHT TO THE SITE BY BUS FROM ASUNCION. CHOCHO SAID HE HOPED TO HOLD ANOTHER RALLY IN ASUNCION BEFORE THE ELECTION, BUT GAVE NO DATE. THE LIBERAL PARTY'S CANDIDATE, FULVIO CELAURO, HAS MADE A FEW PUBLIC STATEMENTS COMPLIMENTING STROESSNER'S STATESMANSHIP, LENDING CREDENCE TO THE WIDESPREAD BELIEF HE IS BEING FINANCED BY THE COLORADOS (WHO WILL ALSO PROVIDE HIM WITH WHATEVER VOTES THE GOVERNMENT DECIDES ARE HIS DUE).

5. THE CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES THE OPPOSITION A THIRD OF ALL CONGRESSIONAL SEATS REGARDLESS OF HOW MANY VOTES THEY ACTUALLY POLL. LOCAL LACK OF INTEREST IN THE ELECTION IS SUCH THAT THERE HAS NOT EVEN BEEN ANY SPECULATION ABOUT HOW THE GOVERNMENT WILL DIVIDE UP THE SEATS AMONG THE TWO PSEUDO OPPOSITION PARTIES (OR WHETHER IT GIVES ALL TO ONE OR THE OTHER FACTION).

6. THE ONLY INDEPENDENT EFFORT TO STIMULATE A SEMBLANCE OF POLITICKING HAS BEEN A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS OF OPPOSITION PERSONAGES CONDUCTED BY THE ASUNCION DAILY "HOY." SO FAR "HOY" HAS RECORDED THE VIEWS OF: RACIAL LIBERAL DEPUTY CARMEN DE LARA CASTRO (WHO BELONGS TO THE MAJORITY PLR FACTION WHICH HAS BEEN DENIED RECOGNITION BY THE GOVERNMENT).

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 ASUNCI 00474 022048Z

MENT AND WILL AUTOMATICALLY LOSE ITS OFFICIAL POSITION AFTER THE ELECTIONS); OF DEPUTY FERNANDO LEVI RUFFINELLI, A MEMBER OF THE NOW UNRECOGNIZED MAJORITY FACTION OF THE LIBERAL PARTY; AND OF ANIBAL RECALDE SOSA, PRESIDENT OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS NEVER SEEN FIT TO RECOGNIZE. ALL THREE WERE OUTSPOKENLY ANTI-GOVERNMENT AND CALLED THE ELECTION A SHAM. EVEN THEIR DENUNCIATIONS OF THE ELECTION, HOWEVER, LACK SPIRIT, AND DO NOT COMPARE IN VITRIOL TO WHAT THE FEBRERISTA WEEKLY "EL PUEBLO" ROUTINELY OFFERS.

7. THE MOST IMPORTANT AND ONLY GENUINE POLITICAL EVENT SO FAR WAS THE ANNOUNCEMENT JANUARY 31 THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS APPROVED A 15 PC RISE IN THE MINIMUM WAGE, EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY. THIS ANNOUNCEMENT WAS CLEARLY TIMED WITH THE COMING ELECTIONS IN MIND.

8. IF THE ELECTIONS WERE GENUINE, AND EVEN WITHOUT THE 15PC MINIMUM WAGE HIKE, THE GOVERNMENT DOUBTLESS WOULD WIN HANDS DOWN. THE ELECTIONS THEMSELVES WILL BE LARGELY FREE OF FRAUD, SINCE THERE IS NOT MUCH REASON FOR FINAGLING WITH THE ACTUAL VOTING PROCEDURES OR THE OUTCOME. WHAT IS FRAUDULENT IS THE WHOLE POLITICAL PROCESS WHEREBY CANDIDATES ARE SELECTED, AND THE RESTRAINTS PLACED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

MENT ON INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTIVITY WHICH MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE  
FOR ANYONE TO CONTEST STREOSSNER'S RULE.  
WHITE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** Z  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, NATIONAL ELECTIONS, ELECTION FORECASTS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 02 feb 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978ASUNCI00474  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780050-0712  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** ASUNCION  
**Handling Restrictions:**  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1978/newtext/t197802103/aaaadjar.tel  
**Line Count:** 119  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** 147a6dcd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION ARA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** ONLY  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** ONLY  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 05 may 2005  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** N/A  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 3435920  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ELECTION CAMPAIGN - PARAGUAYAN STYLE  
**TAGS:** PINT, PA  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/147a6dcd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014